THE Reconstructionist

Vol. X. May 26, 1944 Sivan 4, 5704 No. 8

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RECONSTRUCTIONISM IN THIS ISSUE

Dedicated to the advancement of Judaism as a religious civilization, to the upbuilding of Israel's ancient homeland, and to the furtherance of universal freedom, justice and peace.

the Reconstructionist

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WITH ALL DUE MODESTY

From a rabbi in Johannesburg, South Africa:

Many thanks to you for the literature and study aids you have been sending me. The latter have proved extremely useful for discussion groups.

From a USO-JWB Director:

. . . In my own limited way, I have been able to utilize much of the material that is found in *The Reconstructionist* in preparing short *droshes* at religious services which I conduct at military installations in this area.

From a rabbi in Newport News, Va.

. . . Yours is truly a leading magazine. It represents a movement which, like no other one, serves the regeneration of American Jewry as a religious as well as a national entity. . . . I believe it to be a vital factor in bringing about a renaissance of American Judaism.

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Vol. X. May 26, 1944 Sivan 4, 5704 No. 8

EDITORIALS

PRAYER FOR D-DAY

NATIONAL religious bodies, here and in England, have issued a call to prayer. When "D-Day" is announced, the churches and synagogues are to be filled with fervent worshipers, signalizing the "great and terrible day" of the invasion. Whether the civilian population will know exactly when "D-Day" occurs, we do not know. It is therefore well for those who pray to set aside some time each day for meditation and prayer. Certainly enough is already happening to warrant the utterance of our most profound aspirations.

The occasion is an appropriate one to ask: what shall people pray for? Undoubtedly, the first and most obvious answer is: victory. Every man and woman among the United Nations yearns for the utter destruction of the forces of evil, the aggressor governments and the vicious sadistic leaders. More specifically, however, they will want to pray for the safety of their dear ones. It is well, at this point, to issue a warning. Let not those who worship lapse into the spirit of magic and superstition, believing that the words they utter will carry with them the potency of guns and bullet-proof vests; and let them not be disillusioned regarding the power of prayer if their cries to God are not answered point by point.

Whatever effect the prayers of those at home will have upon the soldiers will come from their awareness of the fact that the masses on the home front are with them in spirit. This will hearten and strengthen them, and give them the stamina to face the fearful ordeal ahead of them. But the ultimate value of these prayers will be derived by the worshipers themselves. It is their morale and their stamina which will need bolstering. The man under fire is propelled by the battle itself; the strain upon those behind the lines will, in a sense, be greater.

We submit that worshipers should, first of all, ask for courage, courage to face with steadfastness and resignation whatever may befall them. In the days to come, many lives will be lost, many families shattered. Now, if ever, is there need for that sense of dedication to duty which shall dictate pious acceptance of personal loss. They should ask, too, for patience and strength to withstand the inevitable delays and setbacks on the way to victory. The mind and the heart must be prepared for a long and arduous struggle. The dramatic advent of "D-Day" must not be permitted to lead anyone to expect that the fight will be over when the sun sets upon that fateful day.

Perhaps most vital of all that should

be prayed for is the will to ethical effort. Religious leaders know, or should know, that praying becomes a self-defeating act when it develops into a substitute for action. Indeed, this call to prayer would have come with better grace if the religious bodies had occupied themselves heretofore with the militant battle against black markets, luxury spending and self-indulgence. Sadly enough, religious organizations have not been in the vanguard of that struggle. But whatever omissions may have been made, the opportunity now presents itself to utilize the emotional impact of "D Day" to call the people to repentance as well. Let the men and women in the churches and synagogues make a real Yom Kippur of the day, and inspire themselves to nobler and more self-sacrificing living.

And when all the preparations have been made, the plans laid and the prayers said, let all conclude with the declaration that they commit themselves, their dear ones and all who fight with us, to God's inscrutable will.

WELL BEGUN IS ONLY HALF DONE

THE New York Board of Jewish Ministers has recently issued a four-page leaflet on Standards for Religious Functions. It seeks to establish correct and uniform standards of procedure for marriage ceremonies, Bar Mitzvahs, funerals and other religious functions. A committee representative of the Orthodox, Conservative and Reform rabbinate had been at work for about two years in formulating a code for preserving the sanctity of these functions against their commercial vulgarization and other abuses. There can be no question that the code drawn up by the Board, if put into practice, would go a great way toward enhancing the dignity and effectiveness of these rituals for Jewish life. Rabbis Ahron Opher, Morris N. Goldberg and Moses Hyamson, who constitute the committee that drafted the code, have done a good job.

But our purpose in writing this editorial is not merely nor primarily to give praise where it is due. Once before, on the occasion of a preliminary report by the Committee, we expressed our approval of its purpose. (See "Realities and Values," THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, Vol. 9, No. 7). But we should like on this occasion to elaborate on our earlier comment. We stated at the time that, while rabbis will naturally welcome the adoption of these standards, they will not succeed in maintaining them unless the laity cooperate.

We wish therefore to suggest a procedure by which at least that portion of the Jewish laity which is most amenable to rabbinic influence be made aware of the need of applying these standards and take a hand in doing so. We suggest that the Standards for Religious Functions be circulated among Jewish congregations throughout the country by the Synagogue Council of America, either directly or through its constituent congregational or rabbinic associations, and *that every congregation be asked formally to adopt the code as its own.* By putting itself thus on record, it would enable the rabbi to urge respect for the code on the part of members of his community without having to bear the onus of administering personal rebuke. He could simply, before officiating at any of the functions discussed, call the attention of the participants to the rules of the synagogue with reference to it. We make this suggestion merely as one way of implementing the purpose of the New York Board of Jewish ministers. Other ideas, as good or even better, may suggest themselves to interested persons or organizations. We, therefore, invite discussion on the subject in our columns. We are certain that the Board will welcome such discussion.

There is one more thought we should like to express in this connection which has nothing directly to do with implementing the standards adopted. *"Mitzvah goreret mitzvah,"* "Every good deed leads to the performance of another," in fact to the performance of a series of other similar acts. Now that the New York Board of Jewish Ministers has rendered the public service of raising the standard of religious functions, we hope that it will address itself to another and even more difficult task, that of raising the standard of ethical behavior on the part of Jewish organizations. Could it not draft a code or codes of practice covering such items as methods of choosing rabbis and other religious functionaries, of enlarging congregational membership without detriment to other congregations, of financing synagogues without resort to disreputable practices, of avoiding abuses of newspaper and other publicity for congregational affairs, of fair dealing with employees of the congregation, etc.? In all these matters abuses of the most flagrant character are frequent and constitute no less of a *hillul hashem* (sacrilege) than the abuses to which the leaflet on the Standards for Religious Functions calls attention.

The field is a vast one and the task beset with difficulties, but this should not discourage the Board. Let them survey the field and limit their interest to one segment of it at a time. *"Hamathil bemitzvah omerim lo gemor"*—"Whoever commences a good work, must be asked to finish the job."

THE METHODIST CHURCH AND THE WAR

THE Methodist Church in America, in its first General Conference since Pearl Harbor, recently determined by a vote of 374 to 300 to reverse its previous pacifist stand and endorse the war effort. The closeness of the vote (among the clergy it was a vote of 170 in favor to 169 against) shows that the action taken must have been the result of great "searchings of heart."

We certainly approve the action of the Conference. The Synagogue has been unanimous in its endorsement of the war from the very beginning. We can conceive of no clearer moral issue than that between fascism and democracy. And in view of the experience of the nations that submitted to the Nazi terror, we cannot believe in the adequacy of passive resistance to secure the triumph of democracy. The military power of the Nazis must be destroyed.

At the same time we can understand, although we do not share, the pacifist scruples of the Methodist minority. After the first World War, the Church was criticised, particularly by the youth, for having betrayed civilization through its endorsement of armed resistance. The frustration of the hope that the World War would be followed by a genuine world peace was ascribed to the failure of religion. The churches were blamed for having contributed to the war and the social catastrophe that followed, because they sanctioned participation in the struggle. And the Methodist Church, smarting under this criticism and being sincere in its desire to see peace on earth, was afflicted with a sense of sin. It consequently resolved that it would never again endorse a war.

To a greater or lesser degree, the experience of the Methodists is one through which all genuinely religious people have passed. It is well that organized religion hold itself to account for its share in the failure of our civilization to prevent war. But a deeper analysis of the responsibility of the religious communities would have shown, and apparently has shown to the majority of Methodists, that non-participation in war by individuals neither removes the causes of war nor justifies neu-

trality in a war in which a great moral principle is involved. That war is evil does not mean that neutrality is ethical. Where the conditions prerequisite for world peace demand the defeat of one side, the failure to take sides may itself be a decisive factor in preventing the ultimate achievement of a just social order. Without that achievement "men may cry 'Peace! Peace!' but there is no peace." The sense of complicity in the sins that have produced the war should therefore express itself in the willingness to bear the burdens of the war. It should impel us to exert the utmost vigilance in removing the causes of future wars, to eradicate from our civilization the malignant cancers of militarism, imperialism, chauvinism, race hatred, religious bigotry and economic exploitation.

The realization by the Methodists of their religious responsibility to offer militant resistance to the satanic forces of Nazism explains the change in the official attitude of that Church to the war. It was convinced, to quote its own resolution, that "God Himself has a stake in the struggle." We Jews, perhaps because we were the first and hardest hit victims of the Nazi juggernaut, have realized this from the beginning. And because we expressed it, we have frequently been maligned as having promoted the war in revenge on Hitler and his followers, or for even more sinister reasons of world domination. We have not allowed this libel to deter us from our support of the war. We are therefore encouraged when so large and influential a religious denomination as the Methodist Church has the hardihood to admit its errors of the past and rally to the cause of God against Amalek.

The decision of the Methodist Church should help remedy the situation revealed in a recent Gallup poll. That poll sought an answer to the following question: "Soldiers back from the war front say most people in this country do not take the war seriously enough. Do you think this true?" The results reveal that 66 per cent of those who responded answered affirmatively, 26 per cent negatively, and 8 per cent were undecided. Apparently the same inability to realize God's "stake in the war" which still characterizes the large minority in the Methodist Church also characterizes wide circles of our American people who have no religious rationale for their reluctance to make the personal sacrifices demanded by the war. Here is a task for the churches. Let them, in behalf of the United Nations, raise the old Maccabean call to battle: "Whosoever is for the Lord, come to me."

IN THE INTEREST OF GOOD WILL

THE drastic action taken by Bishop Thomas M. O'Leary in disciplining Father Orlemanski for leaving his parish to confer with Josef Stalin in Moscow stands in strong contrast with the Catholic Church's profession of inability to halt Father Coughlin's recent campaign of insinuation against the Jewish people. We do not profess to know the intricacies of the Church's canonical law. Nor are we passing judgment on the merits of its action in the case of Father Orlemanski. But we are perplexed and would like the Church to enlighten us.

At a time when the Nazi propaganda machine was everywhere using anti-Semitism to sow seeds of discord between Christians and Jews in the interest of its own nefarious designs against the entire structure of our civilization, the vicious innuendos of Father Coughlin were doing incalculable harm. The Pope and other high dignitaries of the Catholic Church put themselves on record as emphatically condemning anti-Semitism on religious grounds. We understand that representations were then made to persons

high in the Catholic hierarchy of America to put a stop to Father Coughlin's propaganda. But the reply was that the Church had no authority to control the utterances of its priests on matters of general policy, where no dogma of the Church was involved, even when they spoke in opposition to the policies advocated by higher authorities of the Church.

But now, in the Orlemanski case, it is apparent that disciplinary measures may be resorted to in a matter involving policy rather than dogma. That is what perplexes us. Is it or is it not the policy of the Catholic Church to combat anti-Semitism? And if the Pope, in his condemnation of anti-Semitsim, expresses the policy of the Church, what prevents it from effecting that policy by disciplinary measures against those of its priests who, like Father Coughlin, would thwart that policy? The treatment accorded to Father Orlemanski shows clearly that the Church has ways of disciplining its priests for certain offenses against its policy; why not in the specific instance of Father Coughlin?

With all due respect, we ask these questions of Bishop O'Leary and other dignitaries of the Roman Catholic Church. In the interest of mutual goodwill between the religious communities in America, they owe the Jews an explanation.

REALITIES AND VALUES

IT IS REPORTED THAT A DELEGATION of American Jews has been invited to visit Moscow by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee of the USSR. Arrangements are being made for this mission by the Committee of Jewish Writers and Artists, which sponsored the visit of Michoels and Feffer to America. Much speculation is rife as to who will constitute the delegation. It is rumored that the delegation will include a rabbi and prominent Zionist leaders who were cordial in their welcome to the visitors from Russia. If this rumor proves correct, the sending of this mission may have important consequences for the future of the Jews and Judaism. The inclusion of a rabbi in the delegation would give evidence of Russia's new attitude of tolerance and respect for organized religion, Jewish as well as Christian. The inclusion of Zionists would indicate a more friendly attitude on the part of Russia to Zionism at a time when the Zionist movement needs powerful friends. Russia will undoubtedly have a voice in the post-war settlement of Near Eastern problems. Although Russia was hostile to Zionism in the era of mutual antagonism between her and the whole Western World, there is ground for hope of improved relations. Palestinian Jewry has made notable contributions to the Russian war effort which have not gone unnoticed. After the war, Russia can have no interest in favoring Arab feudal lords and British imperialists at the expense of the toiling masses of the Jewish settlers in Palestine, present and prospective. Zionists on a Jewish delegation to Russia may help to obtain Russian endorsement for Jewish claims with respect to Palestine.

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ARTHUR HAYS SULZBERGER, publisher of the New York *Times*, and Mrs. Sulzberger recently presented two menorahs and a "sanctuary lamp" to St. Paul's Episcopal Church in East Chester, in memory of Mr. Sulzberger's parents. The picture in the newspaper shows the two menorahs on the altar on both sides of the cross. We have no objection to Jews' making contributions to churches as a gesture of goodwill and respect. We would have no objection to the presentation of a menorah to any institution of a general civic or neighborhood charac-

ter. It might then stand as a symbol of Judaism's contribution to the common culture of America. But we do not like the religious syncretism involved in donating a Jewish religious symbol to a church for use in a Christian service. The menorah, when used by Christians in conjunction with the cross, loses its Jewish symbolism as representing the light of Torah. Its new function is to illuminate and glorify the cross, the symbol of a faith that has pronounced the Torah inadequate as a way of salvation. We wonder whether Mr. Sulzberger, if given a beautiful cross by a Christian church, would want it set on the "altar" of his synagogue. Perhaps he would. It would be quite in keeping with the Judeo-Christianism of men like Franz Werfel and Sholem Asch, whom Mr. Sulzberger no doubt admires.

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WE HAVE HEARD OF THE BLACK Jews of Ethiopia (and those of the U.S.A.), of the yellow Jews of China, of the brown Jews of India, and now we read of red Jews, in a pamphlet issued by the American Friends of the Mexican Indian Jews. They are descendants of Jewish marranos who intermarried with Indians. With the introduction of the Inquisition in Mexico, they were forced to abandon their faith ostensibly but they continued to practice it in secret and at great risk. After three hundred years of existence as an undergound religious community, they have brought their Judaism into the open and are seeking contact with their fellow Jews. The amazing diversity of types among Jews makes it difficult to define the nature of Jewish unity. It can obviously not be based on race. To base it on religion is to exclude those who are not religious. To base it on nationalism is to exclude those who refuse to acknowledge any national bond with the Jewish people. But if we define Judaism as the religious civilization of Israel, we have a definition of it sufficiently comprehensive to include all sorts of Jews. Whatever Jews anywhere cling to as constituting their Judaism, be it religion, Hebrew language, the sense of kinship with other Jews, or love of Palestine, is clearly a fragment of the civilization of Israel in which all of these are included. The Reconstructionist definition of Judaism is the only one that fits all kinds and condition of Jews, including the Mexican American Indian Jews.

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News and Views, the Yeshivah College Alumni bulletin, quotes from an editorial in *The Reconstructionist* (Volume 10, No. 5) a statement about the failure of non-Orthodox Judaism to provide for its own perpetuation through schools of which the teaching personnel is drawn from its own ranks. The editorial writer of that bulletin takes satisfaction in our frank admission that, in contrast to the situation in non-Orthodox circles, the Orthodox seem to be opening new schools and to have the personnel with which to man them. We do not begrudge our Orthodox friends this satisfaction. But since it is conceded in their publication that "Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionism have grown through deflection of rabbis and teachers from Orthodoxy," it is up to them not only to account for this deflection but to present an alternative to the heterodox ideologies, one which those who are deflected from Orthodoxy can accept. Otherwise it is merely a matter of time until Orthodoxy will also be depleted of manpower for perpetuating its religious ideals.

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FASCISM, EVEN OF THE HOME-grown American brand which is com-

pounded of labor-baiting, revolt against government control and clamor for unlimited opportunity for private greed (euphemistically styled "freedom of enterprise") somehow always goes hand in hand with anti-Semitism. In view of Montgomery Ward's fight against the enforcement of the labor legislation of the New Deal, we were by no means surprised to learn that that corporation is being accused of anti-Jewish discrimination. The *Trend of Events* news bulletin quotes from *In Fact* a statement that S. G. Burke, assistant general Comptroller of Montgomery Ward's wrote a letter asking for employees "between 30 and 45, Christian American citizens."

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THIS SUMMER MANY BOYS and girls will leave the city to work on farms. They have been encouraged to do so by appeals to patriotism and the desire to contribute to the war effort. The Children's Bureau of the Department of Labor, however, calls attention to the danger that the patriotism of these children may be exploited to their hurt. It demands the following safeguards: (1) a minimum age of 14 for children living at home and of 16 for those living on farms or in work camps; (2) adequate preparation for the job; (3) safe transportation; (4) reasonable working hours, including a breaking in period (for children under 16 not more than 6 hours daily, for those over 16 not more than 8); (5) supervision by responsible work leaders; (6) wage rates equal to pay for comparable work by adults and at least income enough to meet living costs at camp; (7) sanitary and first aid facilities; (8) safe and sanitary living conditions; (9) recreation opportunities; (10) insurance coverage in case of accidents, preferably paid for by the farmer. Before sending your child to a farm or work camp, find out whether he will be protected by provisions like the above.

Immortality As An Experience

By MAX WIENER

THERE is nothing tragical in the finiteness of man's earthly career. The "threescore years and ten or by reason of strength fourscore years," allotted to us, should, and in general do, suffice to enable a man to enjoy every kind of beauty life has to offer and to contribute his share to the common weal.

Death becomes tragic only when it nips in the bud the opportunity of a life which has given promise of bearing fruit. In an era when millions of our youth are facing a premature destruction we must resort to the hope that a better world for all may be the outcome of their sacrifices. We regret that the way of history entails war, but we anticipate rays of light breaking forth from the present darkness.

We attempt to save our sanity and reason, which are said to obtain in the world "despite every thing," by comforting ourselves with the thought that a man is no mere individual. Whatever he is he owes to the multifarious groups of which he is a member. Family and nation, professional and religious circles, social and economic classes are more powerful and vital than the individual ego. The ideals and values embodied in them are to be maintained at any expense. The existence

or non-existence of any particular individual does not mean too much as compared with the progress of nations or the advancement of the human race. He who looks for order and true significance in his own experience can find them precisely in its connection with a greater world beyond his selfish desires and individualistic interests. The numberless generations of the past and the unknown centuries of the future are alike drawn into our fleeting years. Visualizing our smallness, we are impelled to extend our existence to the boundlessness of a superpersonal life in which we partake through our imagination.

What, indeed, would we be were it not for those who had worked, suffered, died in bygone days? And will not the generations to come stand on our shoulders? There are no isolated human beings. Those who are our contemporaries, those who preceded us and those who will follow us, all together make up a single personality, a spiritual unity spread over the world. The soul of man is the true reality; the individual spirits are nothing but transient waves in the ocean of life, stones of a mosaic, or letters of a book which, when severed from one another, do not make sense.

Thus we realize that death belongs to life, that it may mean not life's senseless destruction, but rather its perfection. A martyr's fate has always been glorified, his self-sacrifice praised as the noblest act in his career, because it reveals the extreme devotion to truth and duty. Those of the rank and file who give up their lives for a cause designed to speed the advent of universal justice and peace participate in the immortality which inheres in the superpersonal spirit. For what is meant by the indestructibility of that spirit, if not the eternal validity of its ideas and our relentless striving for their dissemination and realization?

As long as we believe in truth, goodness, beauty, we cannot give up walking on the roads to them, stony and winding though they be. We may complain about a Providence which has not established a less painful order, even doubt that the world is governed by an almighty and all-loving Being. However, while we remain convinced that right is better than wrong, and freedom more precious than serfdom, we will rather fight for the good than cravenly surrender to the evil. We feel the individual's very existence to be rooted in a realm of values which cannot be forsaken. We *are* personalities precisely by virtue of the fact that we have our anchorage in that spiritual realm. Therefore, we are as immortal as is the external good.

That way of conceiving immortality, which was discovered by Plato and has since been repeated in numberless variations, is as irrefutable as any geometrical proposition. It *is* true, but does it tell the *whole* truth? Certainly, we cannot exist separated from the universal life. The content of our souls becomes meaningless, unless our wills are motivated by values radiating from an all-embracing Spirit and our minds filled with superpersonal ideas. When confined within the narrow limits of meanness and selfishness, we are dead even this side the grave. Yet, is there not another, a noble selfishness in us, not to be mistaken for the low egotism of a practical materialism?

This question will present itself particularly to a religious person. He will be disposed to see in it *the* question of genuine piety. His mind is compelled to think about God in a twofold way. Indeed, God *is* the perfect, all-effecting will, the Creator, the highest personified truth, the supreme measure and criterion of all ideals, the promotor of life, the ultimate lawgiver and judge. In looking upon Him in that way we work *in* the world,

with the world, fulfilling duties, acknowledging and realizing values, enjoying the wealth of the Universe and contributing to it. Thus we are God's assistants in His creation.

However, "Behold, the heaven and the heavens of heavens cannot contain Thee." God is infinitely more and greater than the world and all, even the loftiest ideals, it includes. Only he who recognizes the Deity as being not merely within but also beyond and above Creation truly walks in the ways of God. That is what the prophetic founders of the Biblical religion had in mind and that is the unfalsified, undiluted heritage of the "revealed" faith.

Idealism, belief in indestructible values, is a noble attitude. It deserves that we live and, if necessary, die for it. Yet, we should not confound it with religious faith merely because both have a foe in common: the materialism that identifies reality with matter and physical effects. The trend of thought which was outlined at the outset of the present article was idealism. We cannot deny its advocates the right to identify the central Spirit safeguarding the unity of ideas and values as God. But their concept of the Divine does not grant all that a religious mind expects and rightfully expects to receive. The God of the idealists lacks the primary quality of the supreme Being: *He is not mysterious,* because he is restricted to an existence within the world and therefore can be demonstrated. Yet, pious sentiment in praying, in assuming an inscrutable destiny, in fearing and hoping, transcends demonstrability and is founded on the unshakable rock of confidence.

To penetrate God's mysteriousness would mean to destroy the very basis of true—not sophisticated—religiosity To unveil the mystery is impossible. However, we see what the veil means to us. For in experiencing it, we become conscious of the fact that the living God's might and efficiency over-reach the borders of our world. The specific emotions and sentiments which accompany our communion with the Divine turn all around one pivot: the awe-inspiring awareness of a boundless, impenetrable, but holy Power. It cannot be accounted for nor described and still it is the most certain and effective reality. We do not know what that Being is, we cannot and should not make an image of what is beyond any imagination. Nonetheless, unknown, strange, even weird though the Divine is, it fascinates us irresistibly. The spell under which it puts us originates from the Infinite itself, which is greater than any greatness, mightier than any might, more precious than the highest values that the profoundest mind can conceive or that the truth, goodness, and beauty in the world can mirror.

The God of Idealism or idealistic science is as familiar to us as are the ideas for which He stands: justice and peace, humanity and social order, freedom of thought and moral progress. These values *are included* in the Divine of which religion speaks of but they *do not exhaust* the meaning of God as presented in the Bible. Therefore when Holy Scripture reveals the supreme will it does so in terms of a moral legislation as it is most impressively voiced in the Ten Commandments. Nonetheless, the background, the very source from which the clear and transparent word emerges remains dark and inconceivable. It is in the thickness of clouds or behind the dazzling splendor of His glory that the Lord wishes to dwell.

Those phrases are proper symbols to express man's approach to the Divine. It is as true that God is the most real and perfect Being as that He remains inaccessible to our understanding. His ways are not our ways; His thoughts are beyond our thoughts. The Universe, its order and laws are or will be comprehended by the human mind, if not today or tomor-

row then in generations to come. Confronted with the *world* and its problems we never ought to say: Ignorabimus, we shall not know. *God* was and is and will be a mystery. We are shaken by the Divine, because it transcends by reason of its greatness and splendor the boundaries of the conceivable. That is meant by the awe-inspiring Shekinah, the Glory.

Here starts pious meditation, genuine religiosity. It does not weaken our devotion to fellowman, to community and humankind; yet it includes infinitely more by placing our soul before God who is infinitely more than the central personality of the Cosmos. Standing before Him we feel alone, not tied up with the men and ideas, the tasks and sorrows which fill the world. We wish to be aloof, not diverted by any delight, not even by the noblest enjoyment of goodness and beauty. We live then on an island, remote from any society. God is our mate.

Now I am an individual, when I am in communion with Him alone. Leaving behind all personal and social concerns, even the most exalted and dignified aims and values, the soul catches a glimpse of that God whose might and glory are too great to be contained by the whole earth. The spirit is not only the mirror of things and events outside, not only a moon which borrows its light from the sun, but also a being for itself living *in* and *with* God.

It is the paradox of a strictly theistic religiosity that the communion with the Divine does not extinguish the strength of personal consciousness. On the contrary, man is never more powerful than when he feels confronted with God, with the true God of religion. Of course, he knows that, within the creation, he is no more than a vessel of clay in a potter's hands. However, he knows also that God is not merely Creator and absolute Governor of Nature but that He transcends the world. And thus man, too, exceeds the rank of bare creativeness. The human soul participates in God's quality of existing both within and beyond the Cosmos of created things.

That is the second way of experiencing immortality. The Jewish tradition discriminates between the world to come and the days of Messiah. That distinction corresponds with what is propounded here. The latter doctrine may be identified with an idealistic belief in history. But what is *olam haba,* what do we know, what may we fancy, guess about the fate of the individual after death?

We are not able to solve that riddle. However, we should take pains at least to understand what is meant by that question. *Life,* as we experience it in and outside ourselves, is apparently restricted to existence this side the grave. For what else is life than tension and solution. Strife and avoidance of strife, hope and fear, ambition and self-denial, succeed one another as life is directed to this or that goal behind which new prospects arise, new vistas open. Life is will under numberless disguises. You may overstrain your imagination and fill the frame of life with most fanciful contents—unless you are able to banish movement and change from your new-shaped creation, life remains what it was. No *gilgul* (transmigration of souls), is a remedy against life. Buddha is right in showing that any *life* beyond this life drags on the burden which ought to be overcome forever. Any rebirth, in whatever form, is nothing but a new morning followed by a troublous day, concluded by a longed for evening, succeeded in ghastly recurrence by another day until the ultimate and final redemption. Redemption from what? From the renewal of life.

We Jews do not follow that pessimistic evaluation of our work and fate in this world. We believe in the ideal treasures which life in pursuance of God's commandments holds forth. But we, as individ-

uals, are not eager to see it continuing without end. And just at that point we should take the symbolic language of the tradition seriously. The days of the Messiah express faith in historic progress, justice in personal and international relations, social equality, perhaps even the future guarantee of a decent standard of living for each and every child of humankind, the fulfilment, so to speak, of a Divine Charter for all.

The Messianic era does not last for ever. Why not? The mythologist will answer that the thousand years approtioned in general to that era are designated to consummate the entire course of history from creation on. Yet, that does not account for the true problem hidden in that myth. Why are the righteous conceived as seated on their thrones, golden crowns on their heads enjoying the splendor of the Shekinah? Why are they not satisfied as many living people pretend to be, with the advancement of the human race? Why are they not described as spiritual spectators of the events happening on Earth? Because life, any kind of life, is interrelated with existence in or pertaining to society and moves from one goal to another. And this life is definitely left behind by the solitary souls of those righteous. They rest in themselves delighted only in the silent communion with the Divine. They neither associate with one another nor are they accosted by God. They are cherished by the quiet bliss of the beyond. They possess God because, divested of the changes and vicissitudes of earthly fate, they own themselves undivided.

That immortality starts here. Our soul participates in it, in that we are not entirely the impacts of worldly aspirations, even of the noblest ends and purposes of social endeavors, but experience the God who is greater than the world. If such faith is truly strong in man's heart it raises him to a sphere above life where the Divine alone is ruling.

It is good to become good. To be conscious of God means this and something else. For not *what we do* makes us like God, but *what we are beyond all our doings* connects us with the Divine.

The Jewish Dance

By DVORA LAPSON

ALL human life leaves its impress on the arts. Jewish life with its rich cultural heritage is no exception. For art must be rooted in a social milieu and grounded in a cultural tradition. Men like Chagall, Bloch, and Asch, for instance, have contributed to the mainstream of Western Art; yet, the motivating source of their inspiration is derived from their own people and their own cultural heritage.

Jewish life in America is slowly but firmly sinking its roots deep into the American soil. A rich American Jewish culture, a product alike of an ancient and glorious heritage and the modern American milieu, is slowly emerging. This culture, as indeed all culture, needs careful tending and nurturing. It therefore behooves the Jewish community of America to be cognizant of its own creative art-forms, encourage Jewish artistic creativity and help generate a Jewish public opinion that would enable Jewish art to flourish.

Of the many art-forms in Jewish life, Jewish music has enjoyed the greatest attention. Considerable attention has also

been accorded to the Jewish drama. The same, however, cannot be said of the Jewish dance. Yet, this so-called step-child of the arts has a contribution to make to the synagogue, the school, and the Jewish Center, which it would be folly to ignore.

The Synagogue

One need not be an advocate of Reconstructionism to grant that the synagogue in America is not only destined to occupy a central place in the Jewish community, but will play an ever-increasing role especially in the light of the prominent place enjoyed by the Church in America. It therefore devolves upon congregational leaders to help enrich Jewish life by having the synagogue serve not only as a *Kaddish* chapel and assembly hall, but also as a place of genuine worship for steeping oneself in the beauty and inspiration of one's own spiritual heritage by means of a meaningful ritual designed to stir the worshiper emotionally.

The religious service of the modern American synagogue has gone through many changes as a result of the influence of the environment. The architecture of the synagogue has changed from the amphitheatre form with the *bimah* in the center, to the modern theatre form, where the *bimah* is placed in the front facing the congregation in one direction. Electricity has been introduced to give special lighting effects in order to highlight the *aron kodesh* or other ceremonial objects. The English language is used for some parts of the service, and modern musical compositions have been added to give the service freshness. All these have contributed color to the service. Unfortunately, however, the exploitation of one very important art, namely, the dance, and its potentialities has been completely neglected by the synagogue.

It is a known fact that the hold which the Catholic Church exerted on the people during the Middle Ages was in no small measure due to its rich pageantry and its highly professional dramatizations of the Bible and the mysteries. The synagogue today could similarly be made to exert great influence if its service was revitalized to include certain forms of dance. All planned movement rhythmically executed in proper form by people placed in certain positions should be classified under the term dance in its extended sense. A procession with the Torah, the placing of the hands in a set position such as the blessing of the *Cohanim,* and the blessing of the Sabbath candles; these are dance forms in worship. The *Shulkhan Arukh* prescribes that we walk to the syngagouge swiftly and leave slowly; that a person who is called up for an *aliyah* should go up to the Torah by the shortest way and return to his seat by the longest way. After the *Shemonah Esreh* the person who prays should take three steps backwards and three steps forward. The turning of the Congregation toward the West when *"Boi beshalom"* is sung during the *Lekhah Dodi* —all these contain a certain basis of form which, when executed consciously with precision and given a pattern, would be dance in the ceremonal sense.

The Orthodox service has still retained a series of ceremonials, but these unfortunately, are often executed in a haphazard manner. Even so they add greatly to the warmth and charm of the service. The service in the American synagogue today retains so little of the traditional ritual, and what it does retain has been so diluted with alien forms that, with the passing of a few generations, many of

our ceremonial traditions may be completely forgotten.

The Kabbalists of Safed are known to have danced out into the fields to welcome Queen Sabbath on Friday towards evening. The Hasidim believe themselves closest to God when they dance in His service and give expression to their religious exaltation in body movement. While this type of religious outlet cannot be imposed on the average synagogue-goer, a moderate form of dance movement in its extended sense can definitely be introduced into the religious ritual of all worship. The Psalmist aptly expressed the verity of this conception when he said: "All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee." (Ps. XXXV, 10)

According to lexicographers of the Bible, our ancient literature resorted to eleven different terms to designate the dance. A study of the numerous passages which employ these terms denoting the dance reveals at least one thing: that dancing played a major part in the religious life of the people. In describing the procession and dance of David before the Ark, the Bible employs five dance-descriptive verbs in order to transmit a realistic pleasure.

In the days of the Temple, processionals and pageantry were an integral part of worship. Processionals, to the accompaniment of the Levites singing and the playing of instruments, were beautiful to behold. The pilgrims came from far and wide to see as well as to hear. "He who has not witnessed the rejoicing at the ceremony of the water drawing has seen no joy in life." The various *Shire Hamaalot* in the Book of Psalms probably accompanied some of the processions as they ascended the steps to the altar.

The Torah procession in the modern synagogue would be given dignity and beauty if an attempt were made to link it with its forebears in the Temple worship. A procession choreographed rhythmically to the accompaniment of a suitable chant would be a fitting way of carrying the Torah. How much more esthetic and appealing to the eye this would be than the hurried little march with the Torah which one often sees in the synagogue at present.

In the Spanish-Portuguese synagogue the processions are carried out in a stately manner, in very slow tempo to song accompaniment. Rabbi David De Sola Pool tells me that, although the processions are traditional and are similar to those performed in the Sephardic Synagogues in England and Holland, the tempo has been slowed up considerably in his synagogue. This and the ceremonial bowing, of Spanish origin, lend dignity and majesty to their service.

Many of our traditional rituals have pictorial possibilities as well as symbolic values that could be reintroduced into the synagogue by cooperation between a choreographer and the rabbi. On first thought, this may sound presumptuous, but there have been successful experiments.

A number of traditonal forms lend themselves to impressive synagogue processionals and ceremonies that would not only appeal esthetically to the congregation, but would also enrich and deepen their emotional experience to a far greater degree than the present routine service, which places emphasis upon appeal to the ear alone, namely, the singing and reciting of the prayers.

I believe that the possibilities along these lines are tremendous. A holiday like Sukkot can become a gorgeous pageant of beauty and color in which the *lulav* procession, one of the oldest ceremonials which has come down to us from Temple days, would be carried out according to

its full possibilities. Every worshiper could play a role that would give him a rich experience. The *Hakkafot* on Simhat Torah offer opportunities not only for processionals, but for actual dancing.

Most of our traditional ceremonies should be moderately styled and given structural form. They could be restored as a potent factor in the religious life of our people in the world of today.

One need only attend a *Bar-Mitzvah* dinner or wedding reception in one of the numerous halls that cater to the middle class masses of our people to realize that there is a great craving of our people for ceremonial and ritual. This craving is being satisfied by a variety of hybrid and vulgarized ceremonials that the commercial hall-keeper invents for the occasion.

The School

The dance can be of value in another sphere of Jewish life—the school. Our Jewish educators, however, have been far behind the times. There is usually no provision made for a dance department in the religious school. Rare cases exist where dance instructors are called in for several sessions preceding the production of a pageant or an entertainment. But the dance offers a great opportunity as an educational medium for teaching the history and life of the Jewish people, our rich folklore, and modern Palestine. Unfortunately, this opportunity has been woefully neglected.

The religious school whose curriculum will provide for learning through dancing will give the child an opportunity for a pleasurable physical and emotional experience. This way of reliving the lesson through a harmonious combination of movement and emotional expression will produce attitudes in the child that will reflect themselves favorably in the pursuit of the regular course of study. More important still, it will help create in the child a warm and lasting love for Jewish values which I assume is one of the aims of the Jewish School. The validity of this point of view as applied to general education has been recognized by progressive educators.

Consider the idyllic story of Ruth, planned choreographically, with the procession, the Oriental dances, the gleaners and the wedding customs. Or the dances of the pilgrims at the gates to Jerusalem on the occasion of a pilgrimage to the Temple. To participate in the reliving of the pages of our history would give the children unforgettable experiences. It would familiarize them with the customs and occupations of the people of the various sections of Palestine and the Diaspora of that period. The ceremony of the *Simhath Bet Hashaevah* (the festival of the water-drawing) with the elaborate gilden pitcher ceremony and the accompanying dances would acquaint them with the Temple ceremonials of the time. The deep experience and enjoyment of such a project would enhance their interest in Jewish history and would create a greater eagerness for more knowledge.

Do children love Jewish dancing? In the realm of the Jewish folk dance we have had some remarkable evidence. In the larger population centers and in Jewish summer camps where Jewish youth groups have been given an opportunity to learn Jewish dances, they have evinced a zest and eagerness beyond all expectation.

How do teachers respond? I have been giving courses to teachers of Jewish schools at the Jewish Education Committee of New York. Many teachers who have for the first time experienced the sensation of learning Jewish values through dancing as an aid in teaching

have recorded remarkable reactions. In many cases they have reported that the classroom lesson has become a creative experience for them and their pupils. They have become convinced that content materials coupled with the simple use of body movement and rhythm, reaches deep into the child's consciousness and makes the lesson meaningful and its effects lasting.

The Jewish Communal Center

To some extent the Jewish professional dancer has come to the fore during the past decade and has begun to make an impression on the Jewish community in the United States as a performing artist. This has been no mean pioneering job. Nevertheless, the Jewish Center or "Y" is not sufficiently interested to initiate a series of programs presenting the Jewish dance in all its forms, or to maintain a laboratory for the exploration and recording of the various aspects of Jewish dance, Jewish gesture and movement, despite the fact that such projects could promise not only cultural, but financial success as well.

The Jewish "Y"s and Centers in the larger cities are noted for their generous patronage of the general dance field. They educate their Jewish audiences by sponsoring all phases of the concert dance including the Spanish dance, the modern dance, the ballet, the gypsy, and other dance trends. It is to be regretted that few and far between are the concerts devoted to the Jewish dance. The Centers, while fanatical in their avowed determination to subsidize all kinds of cultural activities of a non-Jewish character, if only to maintain their influence, have nevertheless done nothing to take advantage of the possibilities offered by the Jewish dance.

* * *

Dancing is the very essence of life. It was the first of the forms of communication. Today it has its professional as well as its non-professional and folk aspects. It has important psychological as well as physical contributions to make to the well-being of the Jew. It has a tradition in Jewish life. It can strike responsive spiritual chords in the spectator. It can take hold of the emotions of its audience. It can teach and educate the Jew. But like Cinderella, it must sit among the cinders awaiting the astute prince who would redeem it and give it its proper place.

The Voice From Horeb

By I. D. MINZBERG

"Every day a divine voice issues from Mount Horeb and proclaims: 'The entire world subsists on the merit of my son Hanina, and all that my son Hanina asks for his own subsistence is a single kab of carob fruit from one Sabbath eve to the next.' "

Talmud Berakot, 17b.

"Every day a divine voice issues from Mount Horeb and proclaims: 'Woe to mankind for its neglect of Torah!' "

Abot, 6:2.

"Joshua . . . said . . . 'There is a sound of war in the camp.' And he said: 'It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome, but the sound of them that sing do I hear.' "

Exodus, 32:17-18.

"It is a tree of life to them that hold fast to it."

Proverbs, 3:18.

..... Well mayest thou weep Haninah, my son ..... the dreadful pincers of doubt and despair ..... the sight and smell of carnage ..... 'let him go for a scapegoat!' ..... 'but who made thee a prince and a judge?' ..... the crushing wheel of armored tyranny ..... the terrifying stare of martyrs on the rack ..... 'the day of judgment is drawing near!' ..... 'the hour of reckoning is close at hand!' ..... the still small voice that will not be silenced ..... yet they refused to listen ..... and now they reap the whirlwind .....

* * *

What a noise these people make as they shout! How their trumpets blare as each proclaims his glory and his righteousness! Shall one leper say to another, "Away from me, touch me not, for thou art unclean"? Shall one harlot say to another, "Come not to my house, I pray thee, nor speak to me in the broad place, lest my name become besmirched"?

Yet were they given good doctrine . . . yea, every one of them . . . Seers did arise among them, men whose eyes were open to the glories of heaven and earth, and whose hearts were filled with the spirit of love and wisdom.

Even as a mother whose breasts are filled to overflowing with life-giving milk is eager to dispense the fullness of them to an avid suckling babe, they were yearning to share the fullness of their hearts with all who were willing to partake of it.

> "Come and drink from our fountain," they called, "Come and drink from our waters, and ye shall see life in all its splendor. Ye shall see it whole, and ye shall be made whole."

But no one made answer to their call; none did come to the fountain. Wherefore they were sore oppressed, and their hearts were laden with care; for their gifts weighed heavy upon them, and their generosity was the measure of their loving-kindness.

* * *

But some of these men said in their hearts:

> "Our nectar is despised because of its appearance, which is plain indeed, and unadorned. Moreover, it is offered us in colorless flagons, with none but us, even ourselves, to vouch for its goodness.
>
> But we must learn artifice from the flowers in the fields, which know how to allure the errant butterfly with a varied spray of colorful petals.
>
> We must learn enticement from the peacock and the peahen; we must learn seductiveness from the nightingale, the linnet and the thrush, and all the song-birds of the woods.
>
> Ay, our nectar must be served in festive bowls bordered with filigree and studded with jewels; then will it be tempting, and its taste will be sweet to the palate."

Thus they said in their hearts, these men of good will and understanding. And thus, grave as priests, fervent and single-minded as lovers, did they set themselves

to the task of devising all manner of cunning works to give body to their vision. "Its ways must be ways of pleasantness," said they in their hearts, these men of understanding and meekness and grace.

* * *

With the industry of bees did they apply themselves to the task before them, with the lamp of creation as their light, and the finger of effectiveness as their guide. And the graciousness of heaven descended upon them, and blessed and fructified the works of their hands.

And from the workshop of them that worked with quill and ink there flowed a stream of mellifluous exhortation: multiform in sound, yet strikingly simple in ultimate meaning: Behold, the Tree of Life!

And from the workshop of them that worked with paints and brushes there came forth a procession of fascinating petitioners: varied in loveliness, yet touchingly alike in their candid appeal: Behold, the Tree of Life!

And from the workshop of them that worked with chisel and hammer there came forth a multitude of brave heralds: differently emblazoned, yet significantly uniform in the import of their message: Behold, the Tree of Life!

And from the workshop of them that worked with the lyre and the flute there came a-winging a swarm of heavenly songsters: warbling in various antiphonal voices, yet exaltedly uniting in the selfsame refrain: Behold, the Tree of Life!

The Tree of Life — that was the vision they had seen. And one was the burden of the message they brought, even of all the sermons they preached: in stone or on canvas, in fable or in song: Behold, the Tree of Life!

* * *

Very cunning indeed was the work of these men nourished by the variously flavored manna of true inspiration! For the signs they wrought were, indeed, even by reason of their multitude, most marvelously apposite to the thing they aimed to signify: so many ways of saying this one and simple truth:

The Tree of Life grows in majesty
in the center of the garden
of the Lord;

but the Tree has many limbs;
each limb has many branches;
each branch has many twigs;
each twig has many leaves.

And some of them are dark,
some are even darker;
some of them are light,
some are even lighter.

Some of them grow toward the North;
some toward the East,
some toward the South,
some toward the West.

Yet they all form one Tree. . . .
And the life that flows through them all
is one. . . .
and sacred!

> Shall one of them say to aonther, "I shall drink thy sap and usurp thy sunlight, and I shall bear the burden of thy life and thy blossoms and thy fruit"?
>
> Shall any of them say that to any other?
>
> Will not then the wrath of the gardener be kindled against the offender for his covetousness and greed? Will he not then suffer it to be pruned with a great and terrible pruning, that the whole Tree will shake and sway and marvel at the knives and the rigor of the pruners?

* * *

The sacredness of the Tree and the Oneness thereof—that was the message brought to these peoples, delivered to each one in its own tongue, even after the manner of its own speech.

The sacredness of the Tree and the Oneness thereof—that was the nectar offered to each of them, in cups cunningly designed after the pattern of its own bouquet of varied tastes.

Still they persisted in their frowardness, even while they made a show of listening to the message. Ay, they refused to drink of the life-giving draft, the while they paid homage to the ingenuity of the cups that contained it. . . .

* * *

> "Wherefore praise ye the shadow, but ignore the the substance. O ye brood of witless reprobates?"
>
> "Wherefore worship ye the sign instead of the significance, O tribe of stiffnecked idolaters?
>
> "Wherefore gaze ye at the cup, but refuse to drink of its contents, O congregation of wild asses?"

Thus cried these men in the bitterness of their souls to all the peoples in their lands, but in vain; for the people would not lay their words to heart.

Moreover, the men that spoke to them, men as frugal at table as regal in spirit, were held in derision by most of their listeners, who would point their fingers at them, saying: "Behold indeed these men who presume to teach us wisdom, they who find sufficiency in a fare of carob-beans."

* * *

Ay, these people despised wisdom, but surely delighted in folly. Wherefore the pruning has ever proceeded amain, on one side or the other, even one pruning following the other. And now, behold, the Tree is a-trembling down to its roots. . . .

* * *

Howbeit ..... after the Almighty has dealt bitterly ..... evil that is naked ..... evil that is shrouded ..... the thunderings and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet ..... "Come, come, come all peoples, come and see the pruning of the Pruners!" ..... angry hands tearing the veil of sacredotal procurers ..... the plain sackcloth of redeeming penitence ..... the white thrill of supreme atonement ..... the hills resounding to the feet of the messenger ..... the jubilating songs of celebrating harvesters ..... Hosannah, Hosannah, Hosannah in the highest!

Judaism and Christianity — Fact and Fiction

By THEODORE FRIEDMAN

NOTHING is more curiously provoking than the stubborn perseverance of a forlorn hope. Such hope has been entertained by the Christian world in regard to the Jewish people. Christian theology assumed that Jews would eventually be converted to Christianity. That notion is already foreshadowed by Paul the Apostle, who expected that ultimately a remnant of Israel would be "saved." In his more generous moods, St. Jerome allowed that after the gathering in of the Gentiles "all Israel shall be gathered in." Insofar as the medieval Church sought to preserve the Jew from extinction, it based itself on the premise that the salvation of Israel would be the crowning glory of the Church at the end of days. For the present, they would remain "the living witness of the true faith" (Pope Innocent III). Individual Jews, now and then, might come forward and offer their testimony to the true faith as might well become living witnesses. But the "salvation of all Israel" like so many other perplexing matters would only be resolved in the end of time.

Little did the unknown prophet of the Babylonian exile suspect what tortured construction his winged words—"Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord"—would have to bear through the long vistas of the centuries. Early and medieval Christian literature abounds in stories of Jews who, under fitting circumstances, offered their testimony to the "true faith." It has remained for Franz Werfel to add another homily to this long chain of interpretation. His contribution to the theme "Jews As Witnesses" is to be found in his short story in the recently published collection, "The Ten Commandments."

The plot is briefly told. During the Nazi occupation of Austria, a rabbi and his family are driven out of their village home by local Nazi hooligans and heartlessly dumped in the middle of the night at the Hungarian border. A friendly local priest, enraged at the Nazi brutality, joins them in their banishment. Despite the Hungarian passports that they carry, they are refused admission into Hungary. In this no-man's land between the two countries, the Nazis fall to mocking and tormenting their prey. The exhausted rabbi is ordered to kiss a swastika. The swastika had been hastily constructed out of a cross stolen from a nearby cemetery. With his last ounce of strength, the rabbi breaks off the two added arms and reverently restores the swastika to its original shape—a cross. The priest who has witnessed the scene and is now the narrator of the story concludes: "He, a Jewish rabbi did what I a priest should have done. He restored the profaned cross."

So the Jew dies, a true member of the Invisible Church. And this, by implication, is the role of Israel in agony; to be a witness to the true faith that has been profaned; profaned, let it be noted, not simply by those who deny it but by that profounder desecration of those who are its official bearers. The latter motif in Werfel's story is quite tangential. Little is made of Cardinal Innizter's placid advice to the local priest: "No interference on behalf of expelled Jews." The climactic emphasis falls on the rabbi's last act, an act for which the reader has been well prepared. The rabbi, we are told, could discourse easily on Catholic theology and quoted St. Augustine, St. Anselm, Bonaventura and Newman with casual facility. Indeed, he "had gone far in overcoming his fathers' wariness of Christ."

What provokes this reader ("infuri-

ates" is the better word) is the obvious in Werfel's story. A rabbi must needs find his apotheosis in a subtle transfiguration from Jew to witness of Christianity. It is, as we have already seen, the old story, suitable perhaps to a Christian writer who sees in his own faith the fruition of the old, but from a Jewish author it comes as nothing short of a denial of Judaism. It reveals a tacit avowal of Christianity as the ultimate in faith and morals with which Judaism and the Jew, in his exalted moments, are essentially identified.

By way of contrast, one turns to a story written a scant quarter century ago by the Hebrew novelist Avigdor HaMeiri. The tale, suffused with horror, bears the one word title "Christians." It is the experience of four Austro-Hungarian soldiers captured during the last war on Christmas Eve by a band of Russians. Three of the prisoners are Jews, one a Hungarian Christian. Their captors are celebrating the holiday with a wild drinking bout. The officer in charge decides to crucify one of the Jews, to force the second to drink Jewish blood, and to bury the third alive. With a crescendo of revolting brutality, the commands of the drunken, berserk officer are carried out. The Christian prisoner openly displays his alignment with his tormented Jewish comrades. With the shrieks and cries of the crucified Jew in his ears, the Christian, besides himself with fury, smashes a picture of the Messiah on the wall and emits a coarse, blasphemous curse in the direction of him whose birth the Russians are celebrating. For this outrage, he is condemned to share the fate of the remaining Jew—burial alive. Bound hand and foot, they are thrown into the same open grave and momentarily await suffocation.

"He said to me in that moment: 'Brother, pray with me in Hebrew.'

'No need for it, brother. You are a Christian. Pray to your God. It's all the same. . . . One God created us.'

"The Hungarian straightened out suddenly. 'Who,' he said, almost angrily. 'Who is a Christian? Me? Together with these vile swine? With that—"(referring to the Russian officer). A moment later, he changed his tone of voice. He was pleading now. 'Please, do this for me. Teach me a short prayer in Hebrew. Please. . . . The name of your God.' 'His name? I don't know. He has no name.' 'But you do have a prayer. I think I heard it once. Adonai. . . . Please. . . . Adonai.'

I bent over towards the face of the Hungarian and thus with my hands tied behind me, I kissed him. He kissed me with a warm sweet kiss full of joyous pain and the anguish of eternal bliss. . . . When my mouth left his, I said to him, Repeat, Andreas, repeat after me. . . .

'Shma . . . Shma Yisroel . . . Yisroel . . . Yisgadal . . . Veyiskadash . . . ' "

There is, of course, a last minute rescue. The essential point is not however the literary quality of the two stories. It is the striking contrast in the treatment of an almost identical theme by two Jewish writers. In Meiri's story, the motivation is natural, compelling. The only Christian in the lot, the captured Hungarian, seeing what horrors are committed in the name of Christianity, how the most sacred symbols of the Church are befouled, would disassociate himself from the very name. But what, one asks, compels Werfel's rabbi in his death agony to restore the profaned cross? Nothing in the story and nothing in the facts of the Nazi occupation of Austria. Did he not know that the church bells were ordered rung when the Nazis marched into Vienna? The order, one presumes, was given by the same Cardinal who approvingly quotes the doctrine that "all authority comes from God." One can only detect the author's own private motivation. For the traditional Jewish martyr's death, *al kiddush hashem,* he has substituted

al kiddush — an ancient theological dogma contradicted by 1900 years of Jewish history and even now being abandoned by a few important Christian theologians.

He who believes that here and there Judaism plumbs to ultimate insights on ultimate questions will take the verse from Isaiah in all literalness. "Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord"; and to paraphrase the Midrash, "My witnesses and not witnesses of witnesses."

CORRESPONDENCE

Dr. Polish Answers His Critic

Sirs:

Rabbi Agus in his letter published in the March 31 issue of the RECONSTRUCTIONIST ascribes to me the motive of attempting to prove in my article, "Nationalism and Religion in Judaism" (RECONSTRUCTIONIST, IX, 19), that "nationalism is kosher." I cannot accept this *perush*. My article deals only with the fact that Jewish nationalism has always been unique because of its inextricable relationship with the Jewish religion. This interpretation of Jewish nationalism is summarized by George Foote Moore thus: "The Jews . . . were both in their own mind and in the eyes of their Gentile surroundings, and before the Roman law, not adherents of a peculiar religion, but members of a nation who carried with them from their land of origin into every quarter where they established themselves their national religion and their national customs. Juster therefore rightly says: *"Il faut avoir présent à l'esprit le caractère ethnico-religieux des juifs et ne pas essayer de diviser des choses indivisible"* (One must keep in mind the ethnico-religious character of the Jews and not attempt to divide the indivisible.)

Nor can I accept Rabbi Agus' gratuitous suggestion that "those who do not accept the scaffoldings of Orthodox Jewish faith" discuss such matters in vain. If the prerequisite to a discussion of a Jewish problem must be the acceptance of the Orthodox faith, a presumptuous suggestion, Jewish life would be stagnant indeed.

DAVID POLISH
Rabbi, Temple Israel, Waterbury, Conn.

An American Jewish Seder and Sabbath Services in London

March 25, 1944.

Sirs:

We started Friday night services. I arranged the routine with one of the enlisted men, a Polish refugee who has been in the States for ten years, talks seven languages fluently, including Hebrew, and is a very fine sergeant. We conducted services in Hebrew and English, held them in the small mess hall but had every Jewish enlisted man that was present for duty there. Some are away on furlough on 48-hour passes. I asked Chaplain Brown to deliver the sermon. I wanted to have Kiddush but had no wine. So I approached the Catholic chaplain for a couple of ounces of his sacramental wine. He gave me a whole bottle, enough for several services. I intend to get some from the Jewish chaplain of this area when he comes around to visit our unit.

I didn't have a goblet, so I borrowed a three-ounce glass from the miniature dispensary that we have. Four officers came too. Before commencing the services, in the form of an annoucement I told them of our desire to have weekly services at seven-thirty, of inviting the chaplain because he was the senior one of our outfit to have a complete service so as to make all feel at home, Orthodox, Reformed, etc. It went off on a high plane, with easy solemnity and sincere warmth and feeling. The sermon was on Jacob and his devotion to God; a very good plain honest one given by a devout Baptist. I made Kiddush, two boys said Kaddish; we sang En Kelohenu and Yigdal and really felt spiritually elevated. For the boys it was supplying a void and they responded fervently.

Through the base chaplain, I arranged for the officer and enlisted men to go a couple of hours' ride from here to a synagogue for services and Seder on Friday, April 7th. It seems that the Jewish personnel in this area will be divided into two groups, one going on Friday and the other on Saturday night.

Some weeks ago, I sent a messenger to a Mr. ..... in London. He represents the Jewish Welfare Board. As a result a big box of Matzos was sent me and some wine to take care of the enlisted men and officers . . . three quarts of wine and about thirty pounds of Matzots.

And last night when I returned from my trip I arranged a Seder service in the officers' dining room. Most of the entire unit were out on a combination picnic and military ceremony that ..... planned. So we waited until their return.

One of the boys scouted around among the farmers and another elsewhere and between them, they succeeded in collecting 25 eggs. These we hard boiled. For herbs we had canned relish. On the plate for the *haroset*, etc., we had an egg, boiled potato relish. We borrowed candles from supply, table cloths we engineered away from some place; where I don't know, because we don't use them in our mess. We had a *talit*, a small silk one for the napkins that you place the three matzoth on. For food we had kosher canned corned beef and matzos and tea, to which we added lemon crystals

(vitamin c) and for dessert, canned peaches.

There are fifteen enlisted men and three officers, and we had as strict an orthodox Seder as possible, with spirit, good cheer, cooperation, warmth and fellowship. We had enough Haggadahs writen in Hebrew and English. We all made Kiddush together and Sgt. Cohen asked the four questions. I interpolated and gave explanations and short personal interpretations of some of the meanings, always ending on a cheerful note, always showing the optimistic side of our travail, and drew comparisons between Pharaoh's time and our own. We ended by singing Hatikvah and the Star Spangled Banner, after first passing around the Afikomen and even singing, One Kid, One Kid.

. . . Can you picture eighteen Jews in American uniforms, recounting the experiences of their forefathers fleeing as slaves from Egyptian bondage; doing this at a sumptuous (!) feast held in an old English castle that probably during its 400 years of existence never housed a Jew.

We had such a warm time. . . Many were the expressions of the boys and some were tearful with gratitude and thanks for the opportunity of having a Seder. We all took part, each reading a paragraph either in Hebrew or English. The Hebrew reading had many inflections indicating the parts of our country and of the world these boys or their parents or teachers came from.

We had a *yomtovdig spirit.* Everyone contributed and we enjoyed it tremendously. We sent a sandwich each, of matzos and corned beef to the Catholic and Protestant chaplains and they enjoyed them immensely, as they afterwards told me. We have a very fine interfaith *esprit de corps,* for which I am partially responsible and very glad. I have always accorded them the highest consideration and have received their complete cooperation at all times. This makes for mutual respect, appreciation and confidence. In the long run this type of dealing will bring a lessening of intolerance and better understanding. I am trying to put in some good licks, by example, by action and by square dealing, and it is bringing results.

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American Army Medical Corps,
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RECONSTRUCTIONISM IN THIS ISSUE

Reconstructionism stresses the importance of religion in Jewish life. Without faith that life is of supreme worth or holy, we cannot ascribe value to *Jewish* life. This faith implies belief in God as the Spirit that gives life its meaning, purpose, and infinite worth. But how shall we conceive God and His relations to human life? Reconstructionism recognizes that many conceptions of God are possible and that Jews cannot all be expected to have the same one. It only insists that, to quote from its platform: "All Jews should seek a conception of God . . . which is integrated with their general outlook on the universe." Therefore the main concepts of Jewish religious thought, such as God, the soul, the Messianic Era, the world to come, immortality need to be reinterpreted in terms that are consonant with modern thought. There may be a wide diversity of opinion in our various reinterpretations of these concepts, but individual thought about them and public discussion of them should be encouraged. Any interpretation of them, which is consistent with modern knowledge may be regarded as a contribution to the reconstruction of Jewish life. Dr. Wiener's article in this isue, "Immortality as an Experience," is such a contribution.

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Reconsrtuctionism not only stresses the importance of religion, it insists that *Jewish* religion must be Jewish, that it must affirm the inherent worth of *Jewish* life, of maintaining the integrity and continuity of Jewish civilization. It has become the vogue in certain Jewish circles that have been dominated by asimilationist tendencies to pay tribute to religion in general while deprecating the specifically Jewish aspects of our religion. They have not discovered any new universal religious values, but they hallow the symbols, institutions and even the prejudiced assumptions of Christian religion, while ignoring the significance and potency of Jewish religious symbols and observances. Rabbi Friedman's article, "Judaism and Christianity—Fact and Fiction," stresses this point by contrasting two stories, both of them written by Jews, of which one represents the religiosity of the assimilationist Jew and the other expresses the faith affirmed by Reconstructionism in the adequacy of Jewish religion and its universal significance.

* * *

Reconstructionism encourages the creative expression of Jewish religious values. The symbols and institutions of Jewish religion can demonstrate their vitality only by evoking new and original expressions of the ideas and ideals that called them forth. None like the poet—or for that matter the artist in any medium—can enable us to see general truth in the passing events of our daily experience. Poetry can therefore enhance religion by perceiving and expressing its relevance to the issues of modern life. The poem by I. D. Minzberg weaves traditional motifs connected with the revelation on Mount Sinai, the theme of Shavuot, into a pattern that clearly reveals their significance for our generation in its struggle against the sinister forces of nazism and fascism.